

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 and 10-20 are pending, with claims 1, 10, and 16 being independent. Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 10-13, 15-18, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,774,378 to Yang (Yang). Claim 9 was previously cancelled.

Claims 2, 6, 14, and 19 have been indicated to contain allowable subject matter. Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating the presence of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 6, 14, and 19.

Applicant further thanks the Examiner for conducting the interview of February 4, 2004. During the interview, and as noted on the corresponding Interview Summary Form, the Examiner agreed that Yang does not disclose or properly suggest "combining the outputs of sensors into one output and comparing said output with (the) reference information."

Accordingly, regarding the pending rejection of claims 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 10-13, 15-18, and 20 based on Yang, independent claim 1, as amended, recites (in pertinent part and with emphasis added):

A multi-level (hierarchical) process monitoring system comprising a process monitoring unit ... and a plurality of sensors ... said monitoring unit being so arranged as to monitor the outputs of the sensors and to identify any significant apparent change in the process conditions **based on a comparison of a combination of said sensor outputs with reference information**, and on detection of an apparent significant change, to request additional status information from at least one of the SEVA sensor/s to determine whether the apparent change is in reality due to a change in the characteristics of a particular SEVA sensor rather than an actual significant change in the process conditions.

Similarly, independent claim 10, as amended, recites (in pertinent part and with emphasis added):

combining the first sensor signal and the second sensor signal at a control unit to determine apparent status information related to the process;
comparing the apparent status information with reference data to obtain comparison information; and
obtaining sensor status information related to the first sensor, in response to the comparison information.

Finally, independent claim 16, as amended, recites (in pertinent part and with emphasis added):

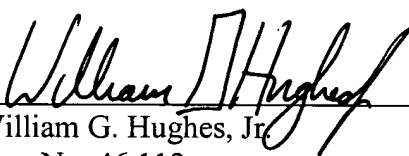
a process monitor having access to sensor reference information
and operable to **combine the first measurement and second
measurement to obtain an apparent process status**, and further
**operable to compare the apparent process status with the sensor
reference information** so as to distinguish between a sensor malfunction
and an actual process status.

As agreed at the February 4 Interview, Yang does not disclose or properly suggest these features. As a result, Applicant respectfully submits that all of independent claims 1, 10, and 16 are allowable for at least the above reasons, so that dependent claims 3-5, 7, 8, 11-13, 15, 17, 18, and 20 also are allowable for at least the same reasons. Since claims 2, 6, 14, and 19 have already been indicated to contain allowable subject matter, Applicant submits that all claims are in condition for allowance, and such action is requested in the Examiner's next official communication.

Please apply any necessary charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: February 5, 2004



William G. Hughes, Jr.
Reg. No. 46,112

Fish & Richardson P.C.
1425 K Street, N.W.
11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005-3500
Telephone: (202) 783-5070
Facsimile: (202) 783-2331